

# Draft Environmental Assessment

## Giant Springs State Park Pedestrian and Bicycle Safety Project



February 10, 2009



**Montana Fish,  
Wildlife & Parks**

# Pre-Draft Environmental Assessment MEPA, NEPA, MCA 23-1-110 CHECKLIST

## PART I. PROPOSED ACTION DESCRIPTION

1. **Proposed state action:** Montana Fish, Wildlife and Parks (FWP) proposes to allow The Montana Department of Transportation (MDT) to construct a Pedestrian and Bicycle Safety Project Trail on a portion of FWP property in Giant Springs State Park near the intersection of River Drive and Giant Springs Rd. This project is also in cooperation with the City of Great Falls and Recreational Trails, Inc. After MDT completes the project, FWP will accept responsibility for long-term maintenance in a manner similar to other portions of the Rivers Edge Trail on FWP property.

This proposed trail is one part of the larger Pedestrian and Bicycle Safety Project CM 5299 that MDT is designing and planning for the Great Falls community. The project on FWP property will provide a protected trail connection with the existing Rivers Edge Trail and provide pedestrians and bicyclists a safe travel path instead of using heavily traveled Giant Springs Rd and River Drive.

2. **Agency authority for the proposed action:** FWP has authority to provide development and access for public recreation. 23-1-101 MCA

3. **Name of project:** Giant Springs State Park Pedestrian and Bicycle Safety Project CM 5299 (63).

4. **Project sponsor (if other than the agency):**  
Montana Department of Transportation  
PO Box 201001  
Helena, MT 59620-1001

5. **Anticipated Schedule:**  
Estimated Construction Commencement Date: Spring 2009  
Estimated Completion Date: Fall 2009  
Current Status of Project Design (% complete): 98%

6. **Location affected by proposed action (See Appendix B for site map):**  
Cascade County, Section 5, T20N, R4E

7. **Project size -- estimate the number of acres that would be directly affected that are currently:**

	<u>Acres</u>		<u>Acres</u>
(a) Developed:		(d) Floodplain	<u>0</u>
Residential	<u>0</u>		
Industrial	<u>0</u>	(e) Productive:	
(existing shop area)		Irrigated cropland	<u>0</u>
(b) Open Space/	<u>less than 1 ac</u>	Dry cropland	<u>0</u>
Woodlands/Recreation		Forestry	<u>0</u>
(c) Wetlands/Riparian	<u>0</u>	Rangeland	<u>0</u>
Areas		Other	<u>0</u>

**8. Listing of any other Local, State or Federal agency that has overlapping or additional jurisdiction.**

Montana Department of Transportation (MDT)

US Dept of the Interior, Land and Water Conservation Fund (LWCF) --  
Walt Timmerman, FWP's Parks Recreation Bureau Chief, completed a review of the project and he determined that this project would not result in a conversion of any lands encumbered by Section 6(f) of the National Land & Water Conservation Fund Act (LWCF). Therefore, the proposed developments would not require MDT to acquire any temporary or permanent interests on lands encumbered by 6(f) funds.

- (a) Permits:** MDT is responsible for acquiring any permits required. See Biological Services Report dated September 8, 2004 from Bob Effinger (Appendix C).

<u>Agency Name</u>	<u>Permits</u>
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**(b) Funding:**

<u>Agency Name</u>	<u>Funding Amount</u>
MT Dept Transportation	\$532,232.45

Note: This amount is for entire project at three sites, the FWP project area is only a portion of this total.

FWP will not be expending any funds during construction.

**(c) Other Overlapping or Additional Jurisdictional Responsibilities:**

<u>Agency Name</u>	<u>Type of Responsibility</u>
MT Dept Transportation	Highway Right-of-Way
BNSF Railroad	Railroad Right-of-Way
Recreational Trails Inc.	Trail easement

**9. Narrative summary of the proposed action:**

As a community effort, Montana Department of Transportation (MDT) is working with the City of Great Falls, Recreational Trails Inc. and FWP to enhance pedestrian and bicycle facilities at three key areas in the community. One of the projects, called Site 1 by MDT, is proposed for construction on FWP property. That project will provide a paved trail, separated from motor vehicle traffic so pedestrians and bicyclists can avoid heavily traveled River Drive and Giant Springs Rd. This trail connection is part of the Master Plan adopted in the 2004 Giant Springs Park Management Plan. Currently, pedestrians and bicyclists traveling to or from Giant Springs State Park, the Rivers Edge Trail or the Lewis & Clark Interpretive Center to/from the area of 38<sup>th</sup> St. must utilize the shoulders of River Drive or Giant Springs Rd., which do not have widened shoulders or bike lanes. Safety issues exist for pedestrians, bicyclists, as well as motor vehicle operators in this area due to traffic volume, motor vehicle speed, and the intersection of River Drive with Giant Springs Rd. An at-grade railroad crossing with BNSF Railroad adds to the current safety issues.

Other portions of the overall MDT project include: a separated railroad crossing next to River Drive, a separated bike lane along River Drive adjacent to Central Plumbing and Heating, improved pedestrian crossing facilities and safety features at 38<sup>th</sup> St., a bike route along 38<sup>th</sup> St in the vicinity of the City's ball fields, and a bike route connection to 8<sup>th</sup> Ave. No. The combination of these improvements will allow pedestrians and bicyclists to travel from official bike routes on 8<sup>th</sup> St. No. to the ball fields, Giant Springs, the Rivers Edge Trail and the Lewis & Clark Interpretive Center.

**10. Description and analysis of reasonable alternatives:**

**Alternative A: No Action**

If FWP does not allow MDT to construct the trail on its property, the remainder of the project will most likely still occur. This would result in the pedestrian and bicycle route ending abruptly at the railroad tracks or 18<sup>th</sup> Ave. N. Those users would then be forced to utilize River Drive and Giant Springs Rd. as they do now to reach the park or Rivers Edge Trail. This would cause the safety issues to remain.

**Alternative B: Proposed Action**

Allow MDT to construct the proposed trail on FWP property. FWP will continue to work closely with MDT to ensure a safe and high quality trail is constructed. Once construction is complete, FWP will assume long-term maintenance of the trail segment under the existing Memorandum of Understanding with the City of Great Falls and Recreational Trails, Inc. The land on which the trail is to be constructed will remain the property of FWP.

## PART II. ENVIRONMENTAL REVIEW CHECKLIST

### 3. Evaluation of the impacts of the Proposed Action including secondary and cumulative impacts on the Physical and Human Environment.

#### A. PHYSICAL ENVIRONMENT

1. <u>LAND RESOURCES</u>  Will the proposed action result in:	IMPACT *					
	Unknown	None	Minor	Potentially Significant	Can Impact Be Mitigated	Comment Index
a. **Soil instability or changes in geologic substructure?		X				
b. Disruption, displacement, erosion, compaction, moisture loss, or over-covering of soil, which would reduce productivity or fertility?			X		Y	1a
c. **Destruction, covering or modification of any unique geologic or physical features?		X				
d. Changes in siltation, deposition or erosion patterns that may modify the channel of a river or stream or the bed or shore of a lake?			X		Y	1b
e. Exposure of people or property to earthquakes, landslides, ground failure, or other natural hazard?		X				

1a. During construction, there will be soil disturbance within the construction zone. MDT is proposing that the contractor concentrate work activities within the trail corridor as much as possible. Access to and from the trail will have to be provided at several locations, and storage/spoil areas will be designated. These areas will be reclaimed after construction. MDT will require erosion control measures as part of its construction contract.

1a. MDT has consulted with its Reclamation Specialist and stipulated that disturbed areas be seeded with desirable plant species as soon as possible after construction. This will also help reduce or prevent the introduction or spread of noxious weeds. FWP has provided its preferred Reclamation Seed Mix to MDT and requested this mix be used.

1b. MDT construction procedures and requirements will be in place to control construction activities, including soil conservation measures. MDT inspectors will ensure compliance with applicable regulations.

No work is proposed for wet areas or significant drainage areas. The trail will be constructed on relatively level ground that is well drained.

See also MDT's Biological Services Report in Appendix C.

2. <u>AIR</u> Will the proposed action result in:	IMPACT *					
	Unknown	None	Minor	Potentially Significant	Can Impact Be Mitigated	Comment Index
a. **Emission of air pollutants or deterioration of ambient air quality? (Also see 13 (c).)			X		Y	2a
b. Creation of objectionable odors?			X		Y	2a
c. Alteration of air movement, moisture, or temperature patterns or any change in climate, either locally or regionally?		X				
d. Adverse effects on vegetation, including crops, due to increased emissions of pollutants?		X				

2a. During construction there will be odors caused by machinery, and possibly dust created during grading activities. MDT requires its contractors to conform with applicable State and Federal standards relating to air quality, which will keep the odors and emissions to a minimum.

If dust becomes an issue during construction, FWP will meet with MDT in an effort to reduce dust levels as much as possible within contract requirements.

After construction, all disturbed areas other than gravel areas will be seeded with desirable plant species to produce adequate ground cover. Vegetative cover will reduce blowing dust or dirt from these areas.

3. <u>WATER</u> Will the proposed action result in:	IMPACT *					
	Unknown	None	Minor	Potentially Significant	Can Impact Be Mitigated	Comment Index
a. *Discharge into surface water or any alteration of surface water quality including but not limited to temperature, dissolved oxygen or turbidity?		X				
b. Changes in drainage patterns or the rate and amount of surface runoff?			X		Y	3a
c. Alteration of the course or magnitude of floodwater or other flows?		X				
d. Changes in the amount of surface water in any water body or creation of a new water body?			X			3a
e. Exposure of people or property to water related hazards such as flooding?		X				
f. Changes in the quality of groundwater?		X				
g. Changes in the quantity of groundwater?		X				
h. Increase in risk of contamination of surface or groundwater?		X				
i. Effects on any existing water right or reservation?		X				
j. Effects on other water users as a result of any alteration in surface or groundwater quality?		X				
k. Effects on other users as a result of any alteration in surface or groundwater quantity?		X				

3a. The total surface area of the completed 10' wide paved trail is less than .25 acre, so the increase of hardened surfaces is minimal. MDT engineers are addressing hydrology aspects of the project in the design of the project. The location of the trail is on well-drained soils and fill areas, and the trail will not impede natural water flow in an appreciable way. Efforts were made to avoid wet areas and place the trail on higher ground. No culverts are needed within the project area as determined by MDT engineers.

Additional hydrological information is available from MDT.

See also MDT's Biological Services Report in Appendix C.

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4. <u>VEGETATION</u> Will the proposed action result in?	IMPACT *					
	Unknown	None	Minor	Potentially Significant	Can Impact Be Mitigated	Comment Index
a. Changes in the diversity, productivity or abundance of plant species (including trees, shrubs, grass, crops, and aquatic plants)?			X		Y	4a
b. Alteration of a plant community?		X				
c. Adverse effects on any unique, rare, threatened, or endangered species?		X				
d. Reduction in acreage or productivity of any agricultural land?		X				
e. Establishment or spread of noxious weeds?		X			Y	4b

4a. As soon as possible after construction, all disturbed areas are to be replanted with desirable plant species. FWP has consulted with MDT and provided a preferred seed mix of native grasses. Establishment of desirable plant species will help prevent introduction of spread of noxious weeds.

4b. FWP currently conducts noxious weed treatment in the project area and will ensure that existing weed infestations (knapweed) are treated on FWP property before work commences. FWP will also closely monitor the project area after completion and in subsequent years to treat new infestations.

Construction work is expected to occur in a narrow corridor along the trail alignment. Several access areas will be designated for equipment and material movement, and the contractor will reclaim those areas after completion. These areas will be closely monitored by FWP in subsequent years.

FWP will work with MDT and the contractor to ensure proper noxious weed prevention techniques are used during construction, per FWP's Weed Management Plan.

See also MDT's Biological Services Report in Appendix C.

<b>** 5. <u>FISH/WILDLIFE</u></b> <b>Will the proposed action result in:</b>	<b>IMPACT *</b>					
	<b>Unknown</b>	<b>None</b>	<b>Minor</b>	<b>Potentially Significant</b>	<b>Can Impact Be Mitigated</b>	<b>Comment Index</b>
a. Deterioration of critical fish or wildlife habitat?		X				
b. Changes in the diversity or abundance of game animals or bird species?		X				
c. Changes in the diversity or abundance of nongame species?		X				
d. Introduction of new species into an area?		X				
e. Creation of a barrier to the migration or movement of animals?		X				
f. Adverse effects on any unique, rare, threatened, or endangered species?		X				
g. Increase in conditions that stress wildlife populations or limit abundance (including harassment, legal or illegal harvest or other human activity)?		X				

While construction activities may have a temporary effect on wildlife species in the immediate area, the impact will be limited in duration. Similar trail construction projects in the area have shown little disturbance to the wildlife. Primary species found in the area are mule deer, foxes, coyotes, raccoons, skunks, hog nose snakes, and ground squirrels. If construction is to occur before the end of ground nesting season, FWP will carefully survey the area for nests and take appropriate action.

FWP has consulted with Richard Moussel of The Missouri Breaks Audubon Chapter about this project and he has agreed to survey the area before construction to locate ground-nesting birds and take remedial action if needed. The Chapter plans to install several nesting boxes along the new trail after construction, which will improve nesting opportunities, which are minimal at this time in the area.

See also MDT's Biological Services Report in Appendix C.

## B. HUMAN ENVIRONMENT

6. <u>NOISE/ELECTRICAL EFFECTS</u> Will the proposed action result in:	IMPACT *					
	Unknown	None	Minor	Potentially Significant	Can Impact Be Mitigated	Comment Index
a. Increases in existing noise levels?			X			6a
b. Exposure of people to serve or nuisance noise levels?		X				
c. Creation of electrostatic or electromagnetic effects that could be detrimental to human health or property?		X				
d. Interference with radio or television reception and operation?		X				

6a. Normal construction related noise is expected in the project. The area has a high background noise level under normal conditions due to the proximity of the railroad, River Drive, and Giant Springs Rd., the construction will add to this level as construction occurs. No residences or permanent facilities are located in the project area; therefore, no noise disruptions are expected of this type.

After construction is complete, the trail will not add any additional noise since it is pedestrian and bicycle only.

7. <u>LAND USE</u> Will the proposed action result in:	IMPACT *					
	Unknown	None	Minor	Potentially Significant	Can Impact Be Mitigated	Comment Index
a. Alteration of or interference with the productivity or profitability of the existing land use of an area?		X				
b. Conflicted with a designated natural area or area of unusual scientific or educational importance?		X				
c. Conflict with any existing land use whose presence would constrain or potentially prohibit the proposed action?		X				
d. Adverse effects on or relocation of residences?		X				

The project area is currently open space grasslands and railroad/road right of ways. The trail will not influence this use. No changes to land use outside the new trail are planned after construction.

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8. <b>RISK/HEALTH HAZARDS</b>  Will the proposed action result in:	IMPACT *					
	Unknown	None	Minor	Potentially Significant	Can Impact Be Mitigated	Comment Index
a. Risk of an explosion or release of hazardous substances (including, but not limited to oil, pesticides, chemicals, or radiation) in the event of an accident or other forms of disruption?			X		Y	8a
b. Affect an existing emergency response or emergency evacuation plan, or create a need for a new plan?		X				
c. Creation of any human health hazard or potential hazard?		X				

8a. Construction activities may create dangerous conditions for the public, therefore the construction area will be off-limits to anyone not authorized to be in the construction zone. MDT construction procedures will be in place concerning traffic control, safety fencing, exclusion of the public, work place safety, etc. The contractor will be bound by these requirements through their contract with MDT.

9. <b>COMMUNITY IMPACT</b>  Will the proposed action result in:	IMPACT *					
	Unknown	None	Minor	Potentially Significant	Can Impact Be Mitigated	Comment Index
a. Alteration of the location, distribution, density, or growth rate of the human population of an area?		X				
b. Alteration of the social structure of a community?		X				
c. Alteration of the level or distribution of employment or community or personal income?		X				
d. Changes in industrial or commercial activity?		X				
e. Increased traffic hazards or effects on existing transportation facilities or patterns of movement of people and goods?			X		Y	9a

9a. MDT is responsible for compliance with all pertinent highway and trail regulations. MDT engineers and private engineers have reviewed the project design extensively to ensure compliance and provide a high degree of safety. Additional information of this compliance can be obtained from MDT.

This project was developed in coordination with City of Great Falls Planning Department as part of its overall planning process. The project is seen to be positive for the community and its citizens.

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10. <u>PUBLIC SERVICES/TAXES/UTILITIES</u> Will the proposed action result in:	IMPACT *					
	Unknown	None	Minor	Potentially Significant	Can Impact Be Mitigated	Comment Index
a. Will the proposed action have an effect upon or result in a need for new or altered governmental services in any of the following areas: fire or police protection, schools, parks/recreational facilities, roads or other public maintenance, water supply, sewer or septic systems, solid waste disposal, health, or other governmental services? If any, specify:		X				
b. Will the proposed action have an effect upon the local or state tax base and revenues?		X				
c. Will the proposed action result in a need for new facilities or substantial alterations of any of the following utilities: electric power, natural gas, other fuel supply or distribution systems, or communications?		X				
d. Will the proposed action result in increased use of any energy source?		X				
e. Define projected revenue sources		X				10a
f. Define projected maintenance costs.			X			10b

10a. MDT has acquired Federal funding under Federal Aid Project CM 5299(63). No funds are to be expended by FWP during construction.

10b. Region 4 Parks Maintenance will perform annual maintenance of the new trail segment using existing personnel and equipment. Projected costs to maintain this segment is estimated to be \$1,000 per year. Maintenance activities will be similar to that on existing trails. These include mowing a narrow strip along the trail, weed treatment, crack sealing, debris and snow removal, and sign maintenance.

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11. <b>AESTHETICS/RECREATION</b> Will the proposed action result in:	IMPACT *					
	Unknown	None	Minor	Potentially Significant	Can Impact Be Mitigated	Comment Index
a. Alteration of any scenic vista or creation of an aesthetically offensive site or effect that is open to public view?		X				
b. Alteration of the aesthetic character of a community or neighborhood?		X				
c. Alteration of the quality or quantity of recreational/tourism opportunities and settings?				X		11a

11a. The quality of the recreational experience for pedestrians and bicycle users desiring to access Giant Springs State Park and the Rivers Edge Trail will be greatly improved by this proposed project. Currently those users must utilize heavily traveled River Drive and Giant Springs Rd, and a series of unofficial "social trails" that are frequently muddy and rutted. This new trail segment will allow users to safely negotiate the hill on Giant Springs Rd on a paved, separated trail removed from vehicular traffic, and allow them to access an engineered crossing of the railroad tracks rather than along River Drive.

Tourism Report is included as Appendix E.

12. <b>CULTURAL/HISTORICAL RESOURCES</b> Will the proposed action result in:	IMPACT *					
	Unknown	None	Minor	Potentially Significant	Can Impact Be Mitigated	Comment Index
a. **Destruction or alteration of any site, structure or object of prehistoric historic, or paleontological importance?		X				12a
b. Physical change that would affect unique cultural values?		X				12a
c. Effects on existing religious or sacred uses of a site or area?		X				12a

12a. MDT has performed an on-site cultural review of the project area and has determined that there are no significant findings. At the time of issuance of this EA, MDT is preparing their report and will be seeking SHPO clearance. Their report and SHPO documentation will be included in the final reports for this project.

MDT must perform a cultural review as part of the Federal funding requirements. Additional information on the survey and report can be obtained from Stephen Platt, phone (406) 444-0455.

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## SIGNIFICANCE CRITERIA

13. <u>SUMMARY EVALUATION OF SIGNIFICANCE</u>  Will the proposed action, considered as a whole:	IMPACT *					
	Unknown	None	Minor	Potentially Significant	Can Impact Be Mitigated	Comment Index
a. Have impacts that are individually limited, but cumulatively considerable?		X				
b. Involve potential risks or adverse effects, which are uncertain but extremely hazardous if they were to occur?		X				
c. Potentially conflict with the substantive requirements of any local, state, or federal law, regulation, standard or formal plan?		X				
d. Establish a precedent or likelihood that future actions with significant environmental impacts will be proposed?		X				
e. Generate substantial debate or controversy about the nature of the impacts that would be created?		X				

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**2. Evaluation and listing of mitigation, stipulation, or other control measures enforceable by the agency or another government agency:**

**PART III. NARRATIVE EVALUATION AND COMMENT**

This community-based trail project further enhances the excellent urban trail system in the Great Falls area, and connects with the extensive Rivers Edge Trail system already in place on FWP property. FWP has been an integral partner in the Rivers Edge Trail system since its inception, and this current project would continue that partnership. The proposed trail segment is part of the Park's Master Plan, and is in keeping with the goals and objectives established for the park.

The project will have positive impacts on the park in several ways including visitor safety, resource protection by eliminating unauthorized social trails, potential decrease of motor vehicle pollutants as the result of visitors choosing to walk or ride their bikes when visiting the park, and improved safety for motor vehicle operators due to decrease in bicycles on Giant Springs Rd. and River Drive.

**PART IV. PUBLIC PARTICIPATION**

**1. Public involvement:**

The public will be notified in the following manners to comment on this current EA, the proposed action and alternatives:

- Two public notices in each of these papers:  
*Great Falls Tribune*  
*Helena Independent Record*
- One statewide press release
- Public notice on the Fish, Wildlife & Parks web page: <http://fwp.mt.gov>.

Copies of this environmental assessment will be distributed to the neighboring landowners and interested parties to ensure their knowledge of the proposed project.

USFS Lewis & Clark Interpretive Center  
Recreational Trails Inc.  
City of Great Falls Planning Dept.  
Cascade County Planning Department  
Central Plumbing and Heating

This level of public notice and participation is appropriate for a project of this scope having limited impacts, many of which can be mitigated.

**2. Duration of comment period.**

The public comment period will extend for (30) thirty days; written comments will be accepted until 5:00 p.m., March 10, 2009 and can be mailed to the address below: Comments can also be emailed to mmarcinek@mt.gov.

**PART V. EA PREPARATION**

**1. Based on the significance criteria evaluated in this EA, is an EIS required? No  
If an EIS is not required, explain why the EA is the appropriate level of  
analysis for this proposed action.**

The proposed project will have limited impacts, many of which can be mitigated during the construction period by good practices.

**2. Name, title, address, and phone number of the person(s) responsible for  
preparing the EA:**

Matthew Marcinek  
Park Manager Giant Springs State Park  
4600 Giant Springs Rd.  
Great Falls, MT 59405

Roger Semler  
Region 4 Parks Manager  
4600 Giant Springs Rd.  
Great Falls, MT 59405

**3. List of agencies consulted during preparation of the EA:**

Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks  
Parks Division  
Fisheries Division  
Wildlife Division  
Design & Construction Bureau  
Legal Bureau  
City of Great Falls Planning Department  
Montana Department of Transportation (MDT)  
Montana State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO)  
Montana Department of Commerce – Tourism  
Montana Natural Heritage Program – Natural Resources Information System (NRIS)  
U.S. Department of Agriculture – US Forest Service

**APPENDICES**

- A. MCA 23-1-110 Qualification Checklist
- B. Sketch Plan Overview of Proposed Project
- C. MDT Categorical Exclusion Memo
- D. MDT Biological Resources Report
- E. Tourism Report – Department of Commerce

**APPENDIX A**  
**23-1-110 MCA**  
**PROJECT QUALIFICATION CHECKLIST**

**Date:** 12/5/08

**Person Reviewing:** Matthew Marcinek

**Project Location:** Giant Springs State Park, Great Falls, MT

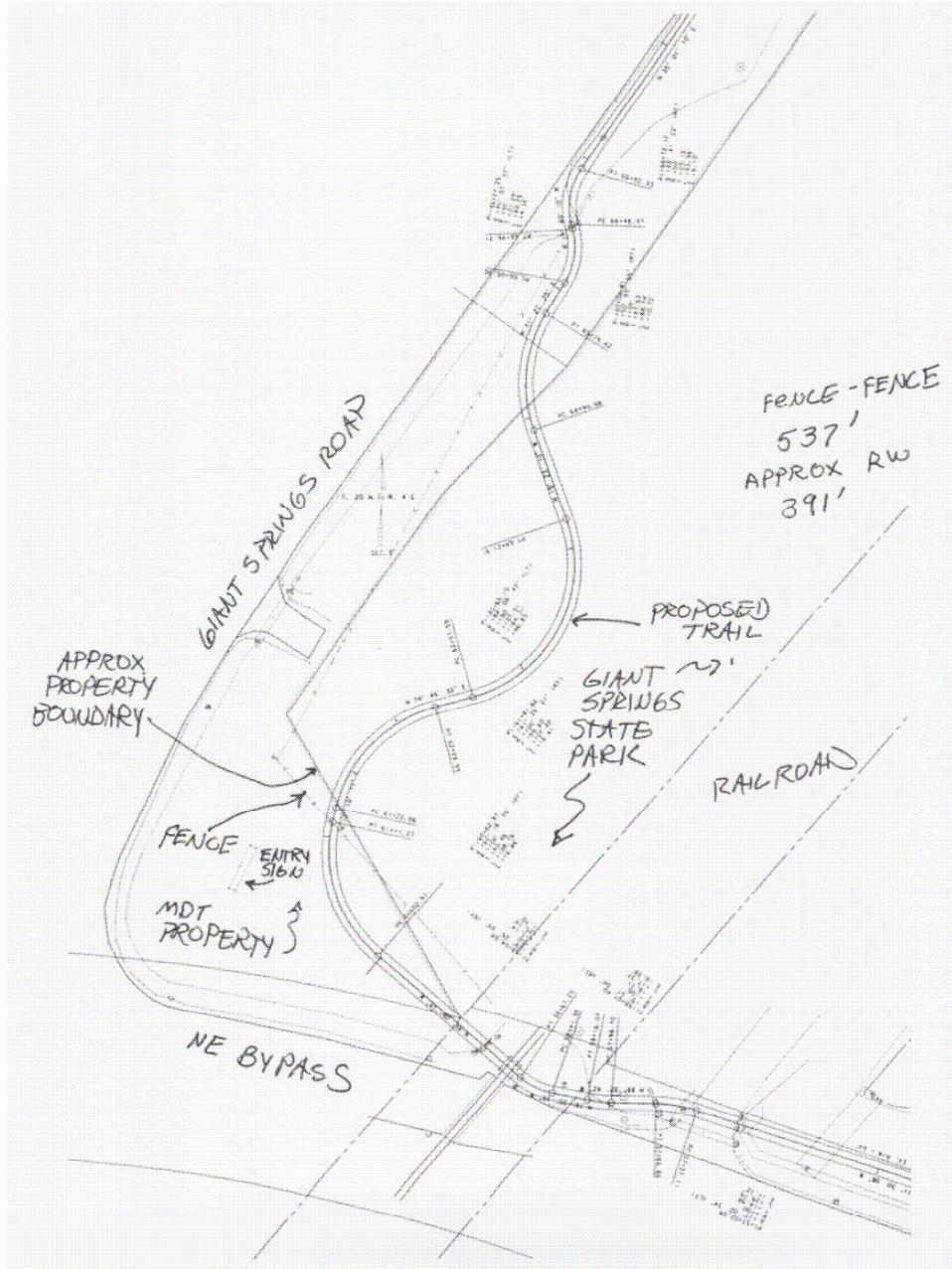
**Description of Proposed Work:** MDT proposes to construct a new paved trail, a portion of which is on FWP property in Giant Springs State Park.

The following checklist is intended to be a guide for determining whether a proposed development or improvement is of enough significance to fall under 23-1-110 rules. (Please check  all that apply and comment as necessary.)

- A. New roadway or trail built over undisturbed land?  
Comments: *The proposed trail segment is 10' in width and approximately 537' in length on FWP property.*
- B. New building construction (buildings <100 sf and vault latrines exempt)?  
Comments:
- C. Any excavation of 20 c.y. or greater?  
Comments:
- D. New parking lots built over undisturbed land or expansion of existing lot that increases parking capacity by 25% or more?  
Comments:
- E. Any new shoreline alteration that exceeds a doublewide boat ramp or handicapped fishing station?  
Comments:
- F. Any new construction into lakes, reservoirs, or streams?  
Comments:
- G. Any new construction in an area with National Registry quality cultural artifacts (as determined by State Historical Preservation Office)?  
Comments:
- H. Any new above ground utility lines?  
Comments:
- I. Any increase or decrease in campsites of 25% or more of an existing number of campsites?  
Comments:
- J. Proposed project significantly changes the existing features or use pattern; including effects of a series of individual projects?  
Comments:

If any of the above are checked, 23-1-110 MCA rules apply to this proposed work and should be documented on the MEPA/HB495 CHECKLIST. Refer to MEPA/HB495 Cross Reference Summary for further assistance.

**APPENDIX B**  
Sketch Plan Overview of proposed Project  
(Provided by MDT)





## APPENDIX C

### MDT Categorical Exclusion Memo

Environmental Services  
Montana Department of Transportation  
Helena, Montana 59620-1001

Memorandum

To: Bonnie Steg, Resources Section Supervisor *BJS*

From: Bob Effinger, Great Falls District Biologist *BE*

Date: September 8, 2004

Subject: Control No. 5482  
CM 5299(63)  
2003 Bike/Pedestrian Facility Improvements - GTF  
**Biological Resources Report**



**Project Location & Description**

This project involves bikeway improvements at three locations in the City of Great Falls, Cascade County. A preliminary field review (PFR) with the City was completed on 8/24/04. This project is proposed by the City as part of the bikeway element of their Great Falls Area Transportation Plan -2003. In response to public involvement the following bikeway network improvements have been prioritized and proposed by the City:

**Priority #1**

This project involves installation of a bike path between 10<sup>th</sup> Avenue North and River's Edge generally following 38<sup>th</sup> Street, River Drive, and Giant Springs Road. During the PFR it was stated that the trail would begin at 10<sup>th</sup> Avenue North and follow along the west side of 38<sup>th</sup> Street. Once the trail reaches River Drive there was uncertainty about how long it would follow along the south side of River Drive before crossing to the north side, eventually turning northeast to follow Giant Springs Road. Likewise, there was uncertainty over which side of Giant Springs Road it would follow before connecting to the existing trail. There was discussion of coordinating with the railroad and its users concerning possible construction of a grade-separated railroad crossing along River Drive to pass vehicle and bike trail users. The path is proposed to be 10 feet wide with an asphalt surface and roadway separation. The potential for joining the bike facility as additional width to Giant Springs Road was discussed but the group appeared to favor a separated path in this area. Environmental concerns related to all alternatives discussed with this project are minimal and discussed below. Issues center around possible 4f involvement.

**Priority #2**

The project would involve installing pavement markings to delineate a bike lane or lanes along 8<sup>th</sup> Avenue North between Park Drive and 38<sup>th</sup> Street North along with signing and transitional marking at key intersections. As a result of the PFR it was determined that the width of the roadway was insufficient to provide for two way bicycle traffic. At best, markings for one-way couplets could be added to the street. However, there remain concerns that parking on both sides of the street is incompatible with a bicycle lane and the proposed project may be dropped. All the alternatives discussed would occur within the existing pavement width. There are no environmental concerns with any of the alternatives discussed at the PFR.

(cont)

B. Steg, BRR, CN 5482, 9/8/04

Priority #3

This project would involve installation of a bike path under the south end of the 6<sup>th</sup> Street SW Bridge over the Sun River. Cloverleaf path connections to 6<sup>th</sup> Street SW would be included in the southern quadrants of the bridge crossing. Environmental concerns with this project are minimal. MDT hydraulics indicated that a floodplain permit will be needed.

**Biological Effects and Analysis**

Species and Habitats

There will be **no effect** on any federally designated threatened, endangered, proposed, or candidate species. None are documented in the work area. Based on the MNHP data received and a 3/25/04 field review, no rare or sensitive species are anticipated in the project area. Impacts to general common wildlife would be discountable to none.

Migratory Birds

While a number of active cliff swallow nests were observed on the Sun River Bridge, the proposed bike trail work is not expected to directly impact these nests or indirectly impact nesting activities. The bike trail work would be located in the upland floodplain distant from the nesting activity which is over the center spans of the river. Nesting in future years is expected to remain distant from the work area, therefore **no related special provisions** will be needed.

Wetlands

In the vicinity of the Priority #3 Project, a narrow fringe of wetlands occurs upstream and downstream of the bridge adjacent to the Sun River. No wetlands occur beneath the bridge in the project area and project work is not expected to extend into the wetland areas on either end. All bike path work will occur above the banks of the Sun River in or above the upland floodplain terrace, therefore **no wetland impacts** are anticipated.

4f Properties

The Priority #1 bike path along 38<sup>th</sup> Avenue would be constructed adjacent to the city-owned athletic fields. The city-owned recreational land in this area is considered 4f property. If use of this property is necessary, **4f documentation** would need to be completed and approved by FHWA. Since the nature of the project use is recreational and enhances the existing 4f use, the documentation would be minimal, consisting of a signed letter from the City approving the use of the land. The Priority #3 bike path would be constructed on an open green space area owned and maintained by the City of Great Falls. This land does not appear to be an officially designated City park, therefore 4f would not apply for bike path use of this property. Tom Gocksch can provide further information and will coordinate these issues.

SPA Permit/Floodplain Permit

None of the bike paths are proposed to impact the bed or banks of any stream therefore **no SPA permits** will be required. The Priority #3 bike path will occur in the upland floodplain terrace of the Sun River. No substantial impacts to the floodplain or flood elevations are anticipated. MDT hydraulics will coordinate any necessary **floodplain permit**. According to the Montana Fish, Wildlife, and Parks fisheries database the Sun River at the location of the project has a substantial fisheries value. Commonly occurring fish listed in the project area include black bullhead, brown trout, fathead minnow, longnose dace, and white sucker. Appropriate **erosion control measures** should be implemented to prevent indirect impacts to the Sun River and its fishery resource. Bank stabilization measures along the Sun River were briefly discussed during the field review but considered unnecessary.

B. Steg, BRR, CN 5482, 9/8/04

404 Permit

No work is proposed a below the ordinary high water mark of a water of the U.S. including wetlands, therefore no 404 permit is needed.

Noxious Weeds

Grading for construction of a bike path is expected to cause substantial new ground disturbance. As recommended by the MDT Reclamation Specialist, to reduce the spread or introduction of noxious weeds, disturbed areas should be seeded with desirable plant species as soon as possible after construction.

Cumulative Effects

Concerning cumulative effects, the project is expected to cause no significant biological effects either individually or when combined with proposed projects in the foreseeable futures.

Copy: ✓ M. Johnson – Great Falls District  
Paul Ferry – Highway Engineer (Pre-construction)  
Kent Barnes - Bridge  
M. Goodman – Hydraulics  
Ivan Urberg – Traffic & Safety  
Bob Effinger – Environmental Services  
Tom Gocksch – Environmental Services  
File

## APPENDIX E

### TOURISM REPORT

#### MONTANA ENVIRONMENTAL POLICY ACT (MEPA) & MCA 23-1-110

The Montana Department of Fish, Wildlife and Parks has initiated the review process as mandated by MCA 23-1-110 and the Montana Environmental Policy Act in its consideration of the project described below. As part of the review process, input and comments are being solicited. Please complete the project name and project description portions and submit this form to:

Carol Crockett, Visitor Services Manager  
Travel Montana-Department of Commerce  
PO Box 200533  
301 South Park  
Helena, MT 59620-0533

**Project Name:** Giant Springs State Park Pedestrian and Bicycle Safety Project

**Project Description:**

The Montana Department of Transportation (MDT) proposes to construct a Pedestrian and Bicycle Safety Project Trail on a portion of FWP property in Giant Springs State Park near the intersection of River Drive and Giant Springs Rd. FWP, in partnership with the City of Great Falls and Recreational Trails, Inc. proposes to allow MDT to construct this trail, and after completion accept responsibility for long-term maintenance.

This proposed trail is one part of the larger Pedestrian and Bicycle Safety Project CM 5299 that MDT is designing and planning for the Great Falls community. The project on FWP property will provide a protected trail connection with the existing Rivers Edge Trail and permit pedestrians and bicyclists to avoid traveling on heavily traveled Giant Springs Rd and River Drive.

1. Would this site development project have an impact on the tourism economy?  
NO YES If YES, briefly describe:

As described, the project has the potential to positively impact the tourism & recreation industry economy.

2. Does this impending improvement alter the quality or quantity of recreation/tourism opportunities and settings?  
NO YES If YES, briefly describe:

As described, the project would improve the quality and quantity of tourism & recreational opportunities.

Signature Carol Crockett Date 12/5/08

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7/98sed